

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION
PACIFIC COAST PENSIONERS ASSOCIATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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CHARLES L. OLLIVIER OF ILWU LOCAL 14, PCPA

INTERVIEWEE: CHARLES L. OLLIVIER

INTERVIEWERS: HARVEY SCHWARTZ

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[00:00:00] **HARVEY SCHWARTZ:** This is part of the Pacific Coast Pensioners Oral History project. Charles, can you give your name, date of birth, and where you were born?

[00:00:19] **CHARLES L. OLLIVIER:** Yes, my name is Charles Ollivier. I was born in France in the year 1936, which was a good year. I was a longshoreman for 35 years, starting in the year 1966. I retired in the year 2001 after 35 great years on the waterfront.

[00:00:51] **HARVEY:** What local were you in?

[00:00:52] **CHARLES:** Local 14.

[00:00:53] **HARVEY:** Where's that located?

[00:00:55] **CHARLES:** Located in Eureka. That's the county seat of Humboldt County with a total population of about 133,000 people.

[00:01:11] **HARVEY:** You're born in 1936. Can you tell me a little bit about growing up in France?

[00:01:16] **CHARLES:** I was born in a little village called Saint-Sylvestre. I lived there until 1941 where we, meaning the family—my parents were both born in the French Alps near Gap. This is where we moved in the Hautes-Alpes in 1941. From 1941 to 1951 I had a wonderful time in a place called Gap, a city that I've visited many times now. When I remember it, it had about 10,000 people. Now there's about 60,000 people.

[00:02:08] **HARVEY:** Where is Gap?

[00:02:09] **CHARLES:** Gap is in the High Alps. Basically, the Tour de France this year stopped in Gap. It's a beautiful place. As we look at the Mediterranean, it is about an hour and a half by automobile. Gap is the beginning of Provence, as they call [it] "the door of Provence."

[00:02:36] **HARVEY:** Why 1941? That is a year that had much going on in Europe.

[00:02:42] **CHARLES:** The war was about to go full bloom. My father was drafted. I had an older sister, and I was the middle child. My younger brother was born that year, in 1941.

[00:03:06] **HARVEY:** You say your father was about to be drafted. The Germans had already occupied France.

[00:03:11] **CHARLES:** Yes.

[00:03:13] **HARVEY:** Were they going to draft him?

[00:03:16] **CHARLES:** He worked as a telephone operator for the French government.

[00:03:23] **HARVEY:** So what do you mean by "he was about to be drafted"?

[00:03:26] **CHARLES:** What I meant, drafted, he was no longer at home. He was shipped elsewhere, and so I never got to see my father in that period of time.

[00:03:36] **HARVEY:** Do you know why they moved?

[00:03:47] **CHARLES:** It was probably economics. My father had spent six years in the US. He worked in the states of Idaho and Utah, mostly for French farmers. In 1931, he went back to France and married my mother. Why I'm here is that we have a long history dating back to the eighteen nineties and the immigration of a lot of people. Since immigration is the story of the world. We start immigrating to Colorado in the eighteen eighties where a great uncle of mine worked in the mines in Colorado. So that was the beginning of the history of the Olliviers and another family by the name of Vashier.

[00:04:55] **HARVEY:** Was there any political involvement or, really, unionism in your family back then?

[00:05:01] **CHARLES:** Not that I can recall going through the history of the family, tracing it back. My father traced it back to 1592. So I can tell you exactly the history of the family through my father, who's the one who initiated all that research.

[00:05:36] **HARVEY:** You mentioned the year 1951 that you're in Gap. What happens to your education and your experiences after that?

[00:05:48] **CHARLES:** In 1951 I was out of high school. I was 15 years old. Remember that in France you start school at three. 12 years later, you're out of high school at 16. Usually you can continue on to the lycée [French secondary school] another two years until you're 18. At that point, looking back at your educational background, they trace your future. Either you go into higher education or you become a tradesman. That's how that works. I truly believe that one of the problems that we have in this country is that we don't have trade schools. We need to go back into that type of system.

[00:06:51] **HARVEY:** What did you do yourself at this point in time?

[00:06:59] **CHARLES:** I was 16, and I can tell the both of you that it was a real shock to my system. To be taken to another country. I'd had the opportunity to study English. Never did. Not only is it a culture shock, but there is that language barrier that keeps you from being able to communicate with your peers for at least a year or two.

[00:07:33] **HARVEY:** How come the family moved to the United States?

[00:07:38] **CHARLES:** As I told you earlier, my father had been here before. At that point, which was six years past the end of World War II, France grew into more and more bureaucracy. My father worked for Nestlé at night, and my mother ran a second-hand store that we had in a great location in Gap. Basically my father became disenchanted with the system. Since my father could speak English, and he had been before. The whole history, going back to the Sidney-Olliviers, I had several uncles that lived in the United States. Uncle Joseph, Uncle Armand, Uncle Léon, who also lived in San Francisco.

When we decided to come to the United States in 1951, we ended up living in Big Piney, Wyoming. Coming from what I had thought a very happy place to a desert elevated at about 5,200 feet where you have a lot of cows, and the weather was horrible, and there was no work for my father. Although we came to this country with some money, the money was going fast as my father didn't have an opportunity to go to work. We didn't stay there too long. We moved to Pocatello, Idaho for about six months. There the only opportunity my father had was to work on the railroad. My father was then 51 years old. He was no kid. So then, my parents decided to move to California where I had an uncle by the name of Armand.

I'll go back into Armand since Armand is really tied to Harry Bridges. My uncle Armand was the youngest Ollivier. There were 13 Olliviers; my father came from a large family. That uncle, Armand, lived in San Francisco in 1934.

Let's go back to us moving. Fieldbrook [California] is where my uncle Armand lived with my aunt Suzanne and my uncle Léon. They had bought the property in 1945. The first time I saw my uncle was probably 1944. Since he had been drafted, not only did my uncle Armand serve in the French army, but he was also drafted in the American army in World War II. That was the first time that I met my uncle Armand.

We will go back a little further with him living as a cook. My aunt Suzanne worked for the Folger family, the coffee family, in San Francisco. One of the world's best cooks. They married in San Francisco in 1944. My uncle was working in the Embarcadero [San Francisco's waterfront road] in a small cafe where those two longshoremen were killed on the fifth of July, 1934.

When I begin to speak with my uncle about Harry Bridges, he had all the respect in the world for Harry. When I was speaking with my uncle about the opportunity, that I was about to become a longshoreman, he said, "Best move you've ever made, Charles." It was a background starting with my uncle and the association. He never met Harry Bridges, but he certainly could read the newspapers every day. And the jail strike that took over after the killing of those longshoreman. Very interesting in the American history.

[00:12:25] **HARVEY:** There's a little split between the time you come to the United States and you go on the waterfront in '66.

[00:12:38] **CHARLES:** Okay, let's go back a little bit. Out of high school at Arcata High where I started going to school right after we moved to Arcata [California] in the spring of 1952. Since I already had my high school diploma, I went to the high school, first of all, to learn English and, number two, to study American History and American Government. Those were the only two classes that I had. I had basically a vacation from studying.

The change that I had from a real strict French schooling system to the American system was just like night and day! [laughing] It was great! A lot of playtime, not too many finals like you have in the European system. The French system remains one of the toughest in the world when it comes to education. They certainly take that seriously.

But, so, out of high school, I went to work for a Purity store [grocery chain] as a bag boy, and I was making then about a dollar an hour, as I recall. I stayed there for a few months. I had the opportunity to work in a sawmill for about six months. There I built my muscles working on a green chain. If you know what a green chain is, it's not an easy job. From there, my father had gone to work for a plywood mill. A plywood mill was a whole lot easier work than pulling heavy lumber off a green chain. That's where I started working on the fifteenth of September 1953. I was then 17 years old. I stayed there for 13 years. In the meantime, at the age of 21, I married Lorna Jean and we had three children together. We were divorced in 1969.

In 1966, I saw an ad in the paper. It said application for B-registration in the longshoremen's industry, the waterfront industry. There was one fellow there that I worked with in the plywood mill whose father had been a longshoreman and was killed in San Francisco. His name was Hutch. He basically told me, "Don't even try because it's a closed shop. Even though you saw the application, the chances are you're not going to make it." What they advertised was they needed skilled help. One thing I could do very well was drive lift; that's what I did in that plywood mill. I had several different jobs. I didn't expect anything.

Two months later came the regular application, and that was very specific. I filled it out. Again, the people that I worked with were telling me, "Don't get too excited because you're not going to make it." Then came the interview. I thought, well, the interview is going to be more serious. There I faced all the old-timers. In those days, Local 14 had about 140 members. You had all the hard-boileds on that committee, as I recall, made up usually of gang bosses. Their first question was, "Can you do the work?" I said, "I certainly am going to try. Yes, I'm sure I can do the work." I gave them my background. They said "What do you know about the longshoremen's union?" Since my uncle Armand was in San Francisco during the formation of the ILWU, I said, "Well, all I can tell you is that I have nothing but respect for Harry Bridges. He's one of the finest union leaders that the world has ever known." I wasn't trying to impress anybody.

I had never worked as a casual worker. Hutch, whose father I talked about earlier, he said, "Well, it sounds like, Charles, it's about to get serious. You should go down there and work. You may not like it." On a Saturday, I went down since I wasn't working in the plywood mill. I went to the hiring hall. A lot of work in 1966 in the Port of Eureka. They cleared the hall, and I was the only one left on the chair. The dispatcher says, "Hey, you! You want a job?" I said, "I sure do!" "Go down to A Dock. Can you drive a lift?" I said, "Yes, I can." I went down, and it was a German ship. One of the hard noses of the local, his name was Kenny Swenson. Old gang boss. He said, "Hey, Ollivier, remember when we interviewed you, you said you drive lift? Well, there's your chance." Went down the hatch. The gang was made up of mostly the people who had interviewed me, so I was really on the spot. Well, working in a plywood mill—which was union, by the way. It was a union mill.

[00:19:39] **HARVEY:** What union, for the record?

[00:19:40] **CHARLES:** Lumber and Sawmill Workers [Union] , 2789.

I thought, well, now's my chance. The gang boss who was down there was Kenny Swenson. "You just point and tell me where you want it." Well, they couldn't bring it fast enough. By 10 o'clock we took a break, and those guys on the winches were going, [makes hand gesture for "okay"] "Ok!" About noon we'd already filled the lower hatch. Everybody was very happy because in those days they were looking at productivity. The gang boss

solely functioned as a gang boss.

The winch driver, whose name was John Anis, he had worked in the woods, and this guy was accustomed to hard work. He recognized my talents. So did the others. As we were working on the dock, he said, "Hey Frenchman, come here." He pulled out his sheet; he said, "I want to show you something. You know we got Greeks in this local. We got blacks, we got Swedes, we got Norwegians. But we don't have any French people in here. I'm going to show you. You already had five stars, but now you got six. You're in!"

It wasn't too long after that I went to work and got a B-book. That was the beginning of my career on the waterfront. I can tell you this—that I loved every minute of it. Never had so much fun in my whole life. The 35 years went very fast.

I became involved upon my full registration—18 months later. I received my B-book November 22nd, 1966. Eighteen months later I was fully registered as an A-member, and at that point I was ready to become an officer of that local. Whenever I ran, I was always elected. First on the executive board, Labor Relations, and the president many, many times. When you really get to know the family of the ILWU is when you go to a caucus. There you get to meet the crème de la crème. You get the feeling of how it really operates.

Harry [Bridges], of course, was still active in my first caucus convention—which was held right here! Right here in the city of the roses, Portland! My wife was with me. We were staying at the Hilton downtown. We were in the lobby, and I said, "Carol, there's Harry!" Harry was having breakfast. I went right to where he was seated. He said, "Sit down. Let's have breakfast together." We had breakfast with Harry Bridges, which was for me a major accomplishment.

To this day, there's no doubt that Harry will go down [in history] —in a country where you don't have a history of labor. It's very short in your history books. Am I right? Yes. It's a shame that it is that way. Labor to me has always been a solution. Unfortunately, in this country the workers are always the problem, and we would like to change that someday.

[00:24:11] **HARVEY:** What's the lumber that you worked with? What kind of work did you do the most?

[00:24:21] **CHARLES:** I worked shortly in a lumber mill, which was the Lumber Handlers. I worked there just three or four months is all. On September fifteenth 1953 I went to work for Humboldt Plywood.

[00:24:42] **HARVEY:** What I meant was, when you were longshoring, what kind of cargo did you normally handle?

[00:24:48] **CHARLES:** The cargo that we had basically was lumber. Number two: pulp. It is one of the reasons that I was registered as a longshoreman that two pulp mills were built on Humboldt Bay [near Eureka's port]. There came the addition of the workforce to meet the demands of skilled labor to handle paper. We had Crown Zellerbach on the south part of the bay, north part of the bay was Georgia-Pacific. They both produced in the neighborhood of 600 tons per 24 hours, so I saw a lot of paper. I loaded a lot of paper. The early eighties, when we had lost the majority of lumber that we exported to Europe, the difference was made up by pulp that we exported to mostly the Orient. Some also went to Germany. Not much to France, as I recall.

[00:26:19] **HARVEY:** What was it like working pulp, for example? What kind of work did you do?

[00:26:31] **CHARLES:** I worked in the hold. I never really cared to be on deck. I told you earlier that I was gifted as a forklifter. We used a squeeze lift to handle paper. That I could do very well. At the beginning we installed a lot of 500 pound bales. We had some old Korean ships that used to come in. Everything was handled

by hand. I can tell you that I was completely in total shape. Those bales were 500 pounds each.

[00:27:11] **HARVEY:** How do you move those bales?

[00:27:12] **CHARLES:** With a handcart. You'd build runways with plywood. You would get to where you were headed, and you'd dump that bale. You had two guys that would pick up the bale and put it in place with these hooks. On a good day we could probably stow 300 metric tons of pulp per gang. Sometimes less. But it was a good workout! I'll tell you that! It was a good workout!

[00:27:52] **HARVEY:** What was your favorite product? What product did you like the most?

[00:27:56] **CHARLES:** I liked it all, but probably my favorite job was stowing lumber on barges. That was kind of a challenge. Working for Sause Bros, they were a great company. They never interfered with loading. They were always happy. They're located in Coos Bay, Oregon. I can tell you that they were the finest people I've ever worked for. They were a stevedoring company. Crescent Wharf was the name, along with Sause Bros. They were the finest employers that we had on the waterfront.

[00:28:51] **HARVEY:** What about the most miserable cargo?

[00:28:55] **CHARLES:** One that I didn't care for too much was logs.

[00:29:01] **HARVEY:** How come you didn't like it?

[00:29:04] **CHARLES:** Because they're dangerous. Especially in the old ships, they were totally dangerous. When we loaded logs on conventional ships, they had decks. They brought one log at a time. They dove the log down to the lower part of the hatches. You had to physically get a hold of that log. You were totally reliant on a hatch tender up there and two winch drivers who couldn't see you. If it happens that the hatch tender wasn't really qualified, you really had your life in his hands. Once you landed the log down there, you had to stow it in place with the donkey. If you're not familiar with the word donkey, it's something that was used in the woods. It was a gas-operated engine that pulled the log up or down. So we used donkeys between decks.

That was one part of longshoring that I didn't care for at all. Until that operation changed to new vessels that were wide open where the winch driver could see you, and you didn't have to touch anything. You could land the load right in place. The log business became a whole lot safer, and I didn't mind. My introduction to loading logs on conventional ships, I can tell you, was totally dangerous.

[00:30:59] **HARVEY:** Ok, that's really good. Tell us if you would about the different jobs. You got active. You were in the executive board. Go through the different jobs you held. Why did you run for office to begin with?

[00:31:16] **CHARLES:** I ran for office because I realized that there was a real need. When I began to attend some of their meetings, I saw that labor was not ever represented on that commission. It happens occasionally that City Council supports supervisors. The Harbor Commission had a lot of power. I ran for it and was elected. Not the first, the second time.

I ran against a woman by the name of Anna Sparks who was very political. I learned a good lesson. She was very well established in her party. Even though running for the Harbor Commission is not a political issue, she made it a political issue running as a Republican. She was very well recognized in the area.

Actually, I really beat myself. One of the young reporters—and you really have to be quite careful when they come to your house. Do not answer a question that is going to be misconstrued. His question was, "Do you

expect to win?" I said, "To be frank with you, I've never run for office before, and I would really be surprised if I won." The headlines in the local fish wrap the next day said, "Charles Ollivier Running for the Fifth District Harbor Commissioner Does Not Expect to Win." That was a great lesson.

But the second time, she was elevated to the Wharf Supervisor. Two years later, I ran in that fifth district, and I won, quite handily by the way. I represented labor. I never missed a meeting. I talked about rebuilding the port, my background, and what I knew about shipping. How important it is to today. . .

Well, I'm still involved even though I'm not a commissioner. I'm active in a couple groups. Since our railroad shut down in 1977 and has not reopened at all, we have no rail access out of Humboldt County. I belong to a group called Humboldt Bay [Harbor] Working Group. What we're requesting, or trying to raise, \$250,000 for a major study for an east-west railroad.

Looking at east section of California from where Humboldt Bay is, next is Trinity County, then Shasta County, then you have Tehama County. All those counties have been meeting regularly. They really want to open up a rail from eastern California directly to Humboldt Bay. I told you earlier Humboldt Bay is the second largest bay in California. While I was a Harbor Commissioner, starting in 2009, we had requested the deepening of the bay. It was several years later that the bay was dredged. We received \$60 million of federal help to dredge the bay from 36 to 38 feet and widening the channel from 400 to 600 feet. Yes, Humboldt Bay is a natural port that can be very useful for shipping.

Remember that in 1968 was the last big year that we had at Humboldt Bay. We serviced 289 ships. As I recall, 1968 we loaded 2.1 million metric tons of cargo, which was at that point five percent of the entire tonnage from Bellingham to San Diego. The entire Pacific Coast. Even though we were not a major force, we were on the map. We always had a ship at anchor in the bay. What really is one of my big disappointments of the area is that not enough people really know what shipping is about. That's the negative part.

[00:37:08] **HARVEY:** With the expansion of the port, its expanded capability, what kind of products would be coming in?

[00:37:15] **CHARLES:** That's a very good question. There's a million different things you could think about. You could tie I-5 to Humboldt Bay. Remember that I-5 being the main artery, where you have more trucks than cars. There's no doubt that we could do containers in Humboldt Bay. Not a problem at all. You're looking at the west side of Humboldt Bay. You have 1800 acres of industrial land that is totally unused at this point. If you come and visit us, I could show you that all that grows on all that land is pampas grass. While we're dying for some good paying jobs. That's the sad part of it.

[00:38:13] **HARVEY:** A little bit more on your offices in the local. You mentioned briefly that you'd been on the executive board and that you'd been—

[00:38:24] **CHARLES:** In all my years that I can remember, I was always an officer. Labor Relations or chairman of the local. Usually I was president for two years, and I'd take a year off. But from there I can tell you that I was chair of Labor Relations. I really enjoyed the job. I was always very proud of being a longshoreman to this day. I think the nicest thing that ever happened to me was marrying my wife Carol. Second to Carol, being a longshoreman has been the best experience of my life.

[00:39:10] **HARVEY:** That's really great. Do you remember the 1971 strike?

[00:39:17] **CHARLES:** Sure do. 128 days on the bricks.

[00:39:21] **HARVEY:** What did you do yourself during that time?

[00:39:24] **CHARLES:** We were on the picket lines around the clock. We had access to food from some of the fishermen who were sympathetic to our cause. You know what I found out that was a disappointment again? We don't know how to clean fish in this country! We're used to go into the store; it's already cut and wrapped for you. The first pickup load of fish that we got from a nice fisherman who'd brought us a bunch of black cod and red snapper. He brought it to the hall so we started handing out fish. I'd thought they were starving. [shakes head] We had to take the rest of the fish down to the Salvation Army. The longshoremen were not interested in cleaning fish! [laughs] You would have thought that after all that time we would have been starving. We live in an area where the guys know how to hunt. You can go clam digging at Humboldt Bay, catch fish, or whatever. You can live there, or catch crab since rock crab is open all year long. So nobody starved.

[00:41:06] **HARVEY:** How did you economically survive yourself during the strike?

[00:41:12] **CHARLES:** I had my parents who helped me. Whenever I needed money, my dad was always right there. I probably had the greatest parents a person can have in life.

[00:41:30] **HARVEY:** That is great. Did you ever get hurt on the job or see any accidents on the job?

[00:41:41] **CHARLES:** Interesting that you would ask. I never lost a day; I never lost a work opportunity. I was never hurt. I received a big plaque in San Francisco from PMA [Pacific Maritime Association] , and there were about 400 people at a big banquet. Art Chu at PMA asked me, "What was the secret of you working 35 years accident free?" I said, "You know what? I never got too close to the work." [laughs] Which was not true.

[00:42:38] **HARVEY:** Of course not! What year did you retire?

[00:42:44] **CHARLES:** 2001.

[00:42:46] **HARVEY:** Ah! Just before the lockout.

[00:42:47] **CHARLES:** It was September fifteenth, 2001.

[00:42:48] **HARVEY:** What did you do during the lockout, now that you're retired? Did you do anything special during the 2002 Lockout?

[00:43:04] **CHARLES:** No, because, as I said, I retired in 2001. I was very active with port development. I belong to several groups that are presently active in port development. I'm really optimistic these days because we have drawn some really very good people. Some from the university—that's a first. We will go to the students eventually. We have a university that has about 9,000 students, Humboldt State University. Labor and students have always made major changes in any system. We work well the students. It's a lot easier to work with them than the older generation there.

[00:44:07] **HARVEY:** Exactly. Why is it that you left office in 2007?

[00:44:15] **CHARLES:** I ran for office, and I was defeated. It was kind of a disappointment for me, but the man who replaced me is not for port development. You'd have to know what's going on presently with the commission, but they're in a process of actually committing hara-kiri [ritualized suicide] . It's ok to think green, and it is a green committee that will eventually destroy themselves because they want nothing to do with shipping, which is really rather unfortunate.

[00:45:05] **HARVEY:** Kind of makes sense in the new era. When did you decide to become a Pensioner, to actually become involved in the Pension Association?

[00:45:17] **CHARLES:** Michael Mullen has been the representative for many years. I had given up my running for office for caucus and convention when I was elected as a public official. My hands were pretty well tied up in concentrating really on doing something for Humboldt Bay. Mike took over at that point. We have three, four meetings a year where our Health and Welfare director comes from San Francisco. Joe Cabrellos is his name. I attend the meetings regularly. Always working with the present group, between 15 and 20, that shows up. Whenever Joe comes up, we want to know what's going on. How the fund is working, that our pension is secure. Those are the questions.

What's really been fun, this is my first appearance to a caucus convention since the early nineties. The same faces are here. [laughing] Same personalities. Only they look older, like me, right? Nothing has changed! Even though they're retirees, they act more like active longshoremen. They want to be a part of the contract, which is really rather unusual.

That was tried many years ago when you had guys from Los Angeles like Chick Loveridge, Lou Loveridge. Strong personalities. "By God, when we retire, we want to be on that negotiating team!" At that point, the actives said, "That will never happen." Well, guess what! They finally got one member on the negotiating team! The PMA may not like what—these guys are very well experienced, by the way.

Because I can consider myself an old timer now, but you look at the experience of an old fart, if you will, that has lived some tougher times than the young guys who are now in office. I'm not discounting; some of the voices that I heard are very, very good, some of our new officers. I'm really elated that we have some of the people starting with Big Bob [ILWU President Robert McEllrath] .

I remember Big Bob because it was my first year as a caucus delegate in 1986. And it was his first year. I can tell that Big Bob worked lentils here. They exported a lot of lentils in those days. It was all hand-stowed in 180 pound bags. I'm sure that Big Bob McEllrath didn't hold back on the work. He is a strong guy with strong leadership, and I'm really elated about that. Anyhow, that's another story.

[00:49:03] **HARVEY:** That's great, that's really great. Have we left out anything major in our discussion tonight?

[00:49:13] **CHARLES:** Probably not. As I said, I've made lots of appearance in high schools and colleges, junior colleges on the opportunities on the waterfront. I probably put a lot of people to sleep. [laughing]

[00:49:36] **HARVEY:** Any wind-up statement that you'd like to make? "What it all meant to me," whatever?

[00:49:43] **CHARLES:** If I was to come back again as a proletariat, I would want to be a longshoreman without a doubt.

Looking at my experience that people wouldn't believe that I receive a raise every other year now. A raise about \$70 a month. There's no place in this world where you retire, as a retiree you receive additional funds. That's unheard of! The longshoremen, starting with Harry.

I left out probably a part of Harry. You know he didn't like Humboldt Bay. Harry did not like Eureka. He sailed as a sailor in Humboldt Bay when he was working on an Australian cargo ship who came in Humboldt Bay '28, '29, '30, '31. Remember that in 1934 [during the strike] some of the ships that weren't working in San Francisco were diverted to Humboldt Bay where they were worked on by longshoremen. You know, Harry never forgave

them. Many times I would ask Harry to come for Pensioners dinners at least. He never did. He was good to his word. He said, "Charles, things haven't changed." I said, "How do you know? You haven't been there?" He said, "I hear. People tell me." You know, Harry was Harry. You would have liked Harry, by the way. You never got to meet Harry?

[00:51:49] **HARVEY:** I got to meet Harry.

[00:51:49] **CHARLES:** You got to meet Harry? Yes, very direct. Remember this is the guy we had to drag out of conventions so we could give him a raise. Where did you find Harry? In the closest, seediest bar that you could find. He was having a beer. He wasn't interested in making big money. He was probably the lowest paid union executive in the history of the United States. I think he was lower paid than the musicians' [union] president, Harry was.

That's the story. You have interviewed a lot of people. You have compiled a tremendous amount of records. I'll share that you guys have done a tremendous job, by the way. Eventually you're going to put Harry Bridges as one of the best union officers in the history of the US along with others like Walter Reuther and John L. Lewis. You remember that Harry and [former president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters union, Jimmy] Hoffa used to be very close.

When I was in the international office, you saw Harry and Hoffa quite often. That the plan was that we would have a general strike in this country on both ends. ILA, ILWU, and all the others unions involved in transportation would be a part of a general strike that would totally freeze this country, finally. Including the postal workers, along with Teamsters, and anything that moved, anything of transportation. That was their plan. It never came about. But it would be a good one! [laughs]

The French do it all the time. And you know what? It's very effective. We go to France. We're accustomed to, if there's the garbage strike or the postal strike, and the farmers will throw all the milk and eggs on the highways. When people ask me about the difference between the French and the United States, I say there's a big difference. In the United States, people are afraid of the government. In France, it's just the opposite. The government is afraid of the people. That is one big difference.

I've had this cold, guys, I'm sorry. But I picked it up about a week ago. I don't smoke so I'm usually in good voice. It's been a pleasure. Any more questions?

[00:55:08] **HARVEY:** I think we kind of got it unless there's one last wind-up statement you want to make. But I think you covered it.

[00:55:20] **CHARLES:** 35 years of total freedom on the job. You look at other unions. Let's face it: the longshoremen are the most pampered workers in the world. [laughs] I used to tell them, "You bastards are so spoiled. You should go out and work for a bad job." I worked in places where they kick you in the ass unmercifully for nothing.

If I could do anything different, with some of the sons who are coming in, I would probably say it's a mistake. They should go to work someplace non-union and learn what a bad job is all about. Instead of bringing them in on the waterfront where they're spoiled too fast.

[00:56:25] **HARVEY:** That's great! Thank you very much.